

# Getting Ahead

NEWS AND ADVICE FOR YOUR CAREER AND FINANCES

## FEB programs aim to expand horizons of future leaders

By AIMEE CURL

LOS ANGELES — To help break down walls between agencies, many Federal Executive Boards across the country offer programs that bring senior feds together to learn about each other's jobs and agencies, to network and to attend specialized training sessions.

These programs vary widely from city to city, but they share a common goal: to help the government grow its next batch of leaders.

In the Greater Los Angeles area, this year's class of leadership associates is getting acquainted after two months in the yearlong program. They gathered on a recent Tuesday evening in Long Beach, after the introductory seminar, to swap stories and share goals.

"I was interested in the program because I wanted to enhance my current skill set and get to know more about different personality types," said Emilia Frankel, a textile analyst and GS-12 at Customs and Border Protection, part of the Homeland Security Department. "I think [the training] will help me with conflict resolution. A lot of conflict begins with miscommunication."

Victoria Chapman, also a GS-12 from CBP who supervises trade and cargo, said she hopes the program will help enhance her promotional opportunities while fine-tuning her leadership skills.

"Because we're with [Homeland Security] we have to be more unified now," she said. "This gives us the opportunity to learn."

Many who gathered for a post-seminar event said they joined the program hoping to get a



Emilia Frankel, a textile analyst at Customs and Border Protection, says leadership training helps her understand the different personality types of her fellow federal employees. Bill Hillar, right, has led seminars for Los Angeles employees for six years.

glimpse into life at other agencies. Some said they were interested in the possibility of future employment elsewhere in the federal government.

"The value is indescribable," said Tyra Wilson, a microbiologist and GS-12 at the Food and Drug Administration. "Federal employees don't get to move around. To have a year to talk to each other and see if another agency wouldn't be a better fit is huge."

Jeff Tran, a budget analyst and GS-12 with the Navy, said he wanted more experience so he could "move up in management." "I'm also interested in networking," he said. "I might want to look into other agencies."

Now in its 10th year, the Los Angeles Leadership Associates Program boasts 220 alumni. The program is open to GS-9s through GS-12s who are sponsored by their home agencies. Each agency



Jeff Tran, a budget analyst with the Navy, hopes the program will help him network and advance his career.

can sponsor up to three associates per year at \$750 each. Classes range from 25 to 35 participants.

Kathrene Hansen, executive director of the Greater Los An-

geles Federal Executive Board, said the program is one of her favorite board activities.

Hansen, who got her start in Washington as a presidential management intern (now called fellows), said you can't underestimate the value of being exposed to different leadership styles.

"It's easy to get caught up in your daily work. The world gets very small and all of a sudden, all you know about is your agency, your issue, your job," she said. "We're trying to help people see the bigger picture, the interconnectedness of everything."

Participants in the Los Angeles program get together monthly to attend seminars. While in the program, they're expected to devote 10 percent of their work time to leadership training and related projects. Projects include writing an individual development plan; selecting and shadowing a mentor; visiting different agencies; and creating overviews of, and performing tasks for, these agencies.

The program culminates with a graduation ceremony during Public Service Recognition Week in May.

"Agencies like this program," Hansen said. "They say it's a good retention tool, that it gives their employees something new, different."

Citing the program's low cost per participant, Hansen calls it "leadership training on a shoestring."

"We provide the opportunity, but they get out of it what they put into it," she said. "It's up to you to make appointments and visit agencies. The minimum

number is two, but some do eight, nine, 10 interviews."

Another model in San Francisco, called the Executive Development Program, differs in a few fundamental ways from the Los Angeles program — the class is structured over two years and 10 people participate — but the goals are similar.

"The idea is for them to get exposed to different agency heads," said Diana Louie, executive director of the San Francisco Bay Area Federal Executive Board. "Working for an agency can be a silo effect. You may know your agency, but in this program, you get to learn best practices from others."

Back at the post-seminar gathering in Long Beach, Bill Hillar, a retired Army colonel and Maryland-based consultant, reflects on the new crop of leadership associates. He's taught the Los Angeles program's introductory seminar for six years.

Hillar said he keeps coming back because feds are the "cream of the crop."

"Most people who know nothing about the federal government and the employees bad-mouth them," he said. "It rejuvenates me to meet these people."

Hillar said he hopes a few things from his seminar stick with the associates.

"I hope they know the difference between leadership and management. I hope they understand what their skills are, and what their potential is," he said. "Hopefully they can develop a lifelong learning plan. I hope they believe they can make a difference."

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## Veterans preference extended

Veterans who have recently left the military will receive hiring preference for federal jobs effective July 11.

Congress extended the veterans preference, which previously applied only to veterans of previous conflicts, to all personnel who were honorably discharged after serving at least 180 consecutive days on active duty with any part of their service after Sept. 11, 2001.

The preference gives qualified veterans extra points on federal employment exams

and requires federal agencies to hire a qualified veteran over someone with similar test scores and qualifications.

"This now gives veterans preference in hiring to individuals such as reservists and members of the National Guard who were called to active duty with the armed forces, whether or not they served in-country," said Jo Schuda, Veterans Affairs Department spokeswoman.

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## CALENDAR

### ■ AUG. 14-18

Government Administrative Management certification week is planned in Arlington, Va.

The program aims to provide government administrative staff with the proper training needed to advance careers and become certified government administrative managers. Topics include improving individual performance and effectiveness, increasing office productivity, handling the latest technology, implementing time and stress management tools, among others.

To learn more, go to [www.performanceweb.org](http://www.performanceweb.org) and click on "administrative management."

### ■ AUG. 18

A seminar, Federal Grants Update 2006, is planned in Seattle.

Subjects covered include: cost principles, debarment and suspension, grants management line of business, financial reporting, progress reporting, property reports and Office of Management and Budget plans for governmentwide award terms and conditions.

For more information, go to [www.managementconcepts.com](http://www.managementconcepts.com).

### ■ AUG. 23-24

The Third Annual Six Sigma in Sales and Marketing Conference is planned in Chicago.

Topics include how to boost top line growth, improve sales efficiency, measure the success

of projects, and overcome the challenges of cultural change.

The conference is sponsored by Worldwide Conventions and Business Forums. To register go to: [www.wcbf.com/quality/5072](http://www.wcbf.com/quality/5072).

### ■ AUG. 28-31

A National Training Conference to promote the professional growth, development and continuing education of federal employees is planned in Anchorage, Alaska.

The third annual conference is sponsored by the Society of American Indian Government Employees.

For more information, go to [www.saige.org](http://www.saige.org).

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